

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents  
FROM: Heather Bouchey, Deputy Secretary  
SUBJECT: Revisions to the Work-Based Learning Coordinator Endorsement (formerly Co-op Coordinator)  
DATE: February 8, 2016

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In the inaugural address for his second term, Governor Peter Shumlin called on all employers to engage with the education system; to open their businesses to students, teachers, and guidance counselors; and to provide opportunities for students to learn in the business setting. The Legislature, in passing Act 77 (Flexible Pathways), responded to the call by including work-based learning as a possible component of a student's personalized learning plan. Educators and administrators have a variety of tools to ensure that the learning experiences students have out of the school building are safe, meaningful, and legal. One important tool is to increase the number of licensed professional Work-Based Learning (WBL) Coordinators.

While in the past, "Cooperative Career and Technical Education Coordinators" were only located in Career Technical Education centers (CTE), all secondary schools where students engage in work-based learning activities must have access to the advice and supervision of a licensed WBL Coordinator- either on-site or through a relationship with a regional CTE center. **A WBL Coordinator is an individual who plans, implements, teaches, and coordinates instruction and related supervised experiential learning in business/industry, professional, and community settings.**

The Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) has worked with a committee of field-based practitioners, Cooperative Career and Technical Education Coordinator license holders, and other educational partners to update the Work-Based Learning Coordinator endorsement. The endorsement revisions support Vermont's goal to increase students participation in work-based learning as part of the high school experience and will ensure that these experiences are safe, legal, meaningful, and sustainable learning opportunities for students, employers, and community organizations.

To support the implementation of the endorsement revisions, we are providing answers to some specific questions we have received:

**What is the purpose of work-based learning?**

Work-based learning activities are structured for career exploration and reinforcement, employment preparation, personal development, or skill development, as it relates to students' learning, interests and needs as documented in their personalized learning plan.

**What is the WBL Coordinator endorsement?**

The intent of this endorsement is to promote and support quality work-based learning experiences in both CTE centers and high schools. According to the authorizing statement, educators possessing this endorsement are *“authorized to establish and coordinate experiential learning opportunities between industry and other community employers and secondary institutions in order to reinforce a student’s program of study, career interests, and goals.”*

It may be helpful to think of the WBL coordinator as analogous to the Library Media Specialist (LMS). A classroom teacher generally presents questions students will be exploring to the LMS, and the LMS gathers resources to help students find answers from safe and reputable sources. Similarly, the work of a WBL coordinator involves finding placements in safe and reputable worksites in the community that will enhance the course of study in the classroom and be relevant to the student’s personalized learning plan.

**Why not keep the “Cooperative Career and Technical Education Coordinators” endorsement?**

Historically, co-op coordinators supervised apprenticeships and co-op experiences from CTE centers. Current practice, however, has resulted in students participating in a wide variety of experiential learning activities at both CTE centers and high schools. The endorsement revision and expansion to include high school educators will support the training of educators performing the role of WBL coordinators no matter their place of employment in order to ensure appropriate placement and the safety of students.

**What is the scope of the WBL endorsement?**

The WBL Coordinator is an employee of the CTE center or high school who is the primary point of contact for all work-based learning functions at the school or district. The coordinator plays the critical function of overseeing the coordination of work-based learning activities. The coordinator is responsible for a range of educational experiences within the continuum of career development. (Please see the [http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Workbased\\_Learning\\_Manual.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Workbased_Learning_Manual.pdf) for definitions.)

Prior to a student engaging in work-based learning, a WBL Coordinator must review the proposal and scope of the learning activity to determine if oversight by the WBL Coordinator is required.

**Do all high schools and CTE centers have to have an endorsed WBL coordinator?**

By State Board of Education rule, each CTE center must have a WBL Coordinator. A few high schools already have a WBL coordinator, though most all earned their license under the previous “Cooperative Career and Technical Educational Coordinator” title. While there is no requirement for all high schools to have a WBL coordinator, with the expansion of traditional high school students in work-based placements, there will need to be a WBL coordinator to facilitate and oversee placements. A high school could

choose to hire its own WBL coordinator; alternately, it could contract with its local CTE to ensure a WBL coordinator is overseeing student placements that demand professional coordination.

### **What types of student work-based placements require a WBL coordinator?**

There are many factors that determine whether student work-based placements require WBL coordinator oversight. In general, a WBL coordinator exists to ensure student safety, protect the student and district from liability, and corroborate that the work is in compliance with child labor law. Most placements are unique and require case-by-case analysis. However, if you answer yes or maybe or if you are unsure of the answer to any of the questions below, your school likely needs a WBL coordinator for placement oversight. This list is for guidance only and is not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive. The final responsibility for determining the need of a WBL coordinator lies with the individual district/SU.

- Is a student going to be spending a substantial amount of time in the placement (more than 40 total hours)?
- Is there the potential for immediate and significant risk for personal harm to the students on the worksite?
- Will the business benefit substantially from the student placement? Will the benefit to the business be greater than that of the student?
- Will the student be compensated?
- Does this placement constitute an apprenticeship or cooperative work-experience where the student will largely be at the work-site, instead of school?

### **Don't all Vermont educators have to incorporate real world connections or authentic learning experiences into their teaching?**

Yes, the [Core Teaching Standards](#) encourage **all Vermont educators** to engage learners in applying content knowledge to real world problems (5b). Educators are also encouraged through these standards to value flexible learning environments that encourage learner exploration, discovery, and expression across content areas (5s).

Educators may continue to design field trips, job shadowing, or community service projects for their students that contribute to their career exploration. The role of the WBL Coordinator, however, is to further support individual students in experiencing safe, legal, and high-quality learning experiences outside of the classroom that are typically of greater intensity and that can be sustained by the community.

### **What about educators who currently hold the co-op coordinator endorsement?**

Current co-op coordinators will automatically have their license transitioned to the new name of the endorsement. Additionally, co-op coordinators will begin using the new endorsement requirements at the time of their license renewal (or sooner, if they choose).

**Are there restrictions on what types of student work-based placements can be offered by different educational settings?**

Certain work-based learning activities that are higher-intensity, *industry directed experiences*, such as career work experiences, cooperative technical experiences and student apprenticeship MUST meet program regulations (federal and state laws) that are frequently only approved through CTE centers.

**How can someone get the necessary training to be a WBL coordinator?**

If an individual already holds an educator license, then s/he has already met many of the requirements for the endorsement, including standards related to working with students with special needs, technology, diversity, and adolescent development. Currently there are no programs in the state which prepare candidates for this endorsement. Educators are encouraged to pursue out of state programs or peer review as appropriate to the individual educator.

If an individual does not currently hold an educator license, s/he will need to meet the WBL requirements and additional requirements including standards related to working with students with special needs, technology, diversity, and adolescent development.

The VSBPE has created an implementation plan to support educators in obtaining the revised license. Please contact the Licensing Office at [AOE.LicensingInfo@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.LicensingInfo@vermont.gov) or (802) 479-1700 for more information on how to add the WBL Coordinator endorsement.

**What tools are available to support the implementation of work-based learning in the schools?**

The Agency of Education worked with partners in 2012 to create “Vermont’s Work-Based Learning Gold Standards” and the “Work-Based Learning Guide” that supports the gold standards. Both of these resources are located at:

<http://education.vermont.gov/work-based-learning>.

Currently licensed Cooperative Educators in the state are an additional valuable resource for educators seeking to add the endorsement.

## Work-Based Learning (WBL) Coordinators Implementation Plan

Goal: To implement the endorsement revisions and support educators in meeting the requirements

Timeline: All educators practicing as WBL Coordinators will need to obtain their license by September 1, 2016.

Status	Requirements
Current Cooperative Career and Technical Education Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• none, license will transfer automatically</li></ul>
Initial WBL Coordinator Endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 18 credits, or documentation of 270 hours of professional development, aligned with endorsement</li><li>• Individuals who have one or more years' experience in WBL types of roles are encouraged to pursue peer review rather than coursework alone</li></ul>

\*within last 5 years